

STRONG DELUSION.

"For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned [as unfit for the honors of the high calling] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." – 2 Thes. 2:11,12.

A delusion is an error which, when viewed from certain standpoints of observation, has the appearance of truth. A delusion is more or less dangerous according to the importance of the truth which it misrepresents, beclouds or falsifies; and, if followed, it leads accordingly to more or less disastrous consequences. If a merchant be deluded and misled by an apparent boom in his line of industry, the result to him may be financial disaster. If a man or woman be deluded by false ideas of life or by false appearances of character when choosing a partner for life, the result may be long years of domestic misery. And, likewise, eternal interests may be, and are, continually affected by the delusions of error on religious subjects.

When a man is deluded he verily thinks he is right. He claims to be honest in his convictions, and he is so. "There is a way that *seemeth right* unto a man; but the end thereof [where the subject of delusion is of vital interest] are the ways of death." (Prov. 16:25.) The world to-day is full of delusions, and of deluded people who verily think they are right, and who expect in due time to realize their delusive hopes. There are political delusions, financial delusions and religious delusions of every shade and hue; and thousands and millions of people are following them, and devoting all their time and energy to them, only to realize in the end a whirlwind of confusion, disaster and the utter wreck of all their hopes.

The questions then arise, Who can escape these delusions so common among men? or how may we know that we are not ourselves among the number of the deluded ones? The fact is that no member of the fallen race is, of himself, proof against them. We are all, in consequence of the fall, both physically and mentally impaired; our experience is brief and varied, and our knowledge is necessarily very limited.

Though we see that financial delusions are continually misleading men and blighting their hopes of temporal advantage; and though we see that political delusions are forming various factions among men and leading them to strive for the realization of numerous delusive hopes, which, in the end, will bring only anarchy and a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation; yet those which chiefly concern the children of God are the religious delusions, or those capable of affecting their eternal interests. **[R1297 : page 54]** The saints have little to fear from financial delusions or disasters, since they are generally the poor of this world who have little to lose, but whose bread and water are sure (Isa. 33:16), and whose treasures are not laid up here, but in heaven. Nor are they specially concerned with the political delusions which we are told shall ere long lead to the great political disaster, which is even now imminent. These are important to the world, whose only concern is their temporal interests. But the questions with us are, How shall we escape the religious delusions so prevalent everywhere? and what proof have we that we are not now under such hallucinations?

These are important questions which no child of God can afford lightly to set aside. But note the words of the Apostle above quoted, which seem to imply that God is desirous that some should be snared, and to the very intent that they might be condemned – "God will send [permit to come upon] them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned."

Who are these whom God thus desires to be snared and condemned? Paul answers, They are those who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. They are not those who never heard the truth, but those who, having once heard and understood it, turned from it, rejected it and had pleasure in unrighteousness – not necessarily in gross unrighteousness, such as crime, but in some measure of unrighteousness; often a desire for a little more liberty of self-will instead of close conformity to the divine will, and consequently a preference for the error which would grant such liberty and silence the promptings of conscience and the voice of truth. Such prefer the error to the truth. Those who receive not the truth in the love of it are not worthy of it, and they, therefore, must go away from it into the outer darkness that envelops the world. To these error comes in its most deceitful forms, and they quickly fall a prey to the delusion.

With the Psalmist, therefore, we may well inquire, "Who," then, "shall be able to stand? – who shall ascend into the hill [kingdom] of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" Now mark the answer: "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." (Psa. 24:3-5.) Here is the class among whom the delusions of error can make no headway. These have a standpoint of observation from which every error appears in its true colors, and every truth in its proper light.

Mark the particular features of this class: They have "*clean hands:*" Their work for the Lord may be very imperfect; they may tell the story of his love and grace in a very halting, awkward manner; they may minister to the temporal or the spiritual necessities of the saints, or others, from a very frugal and plain store of their own; but their work will be *clean*; their story will be free from self-emulation and human glorying, and their works will be free from both ostentation and parade. What they do will be

done with simplicity and meekness, as unto the Lord, and not for the praise of men.

They have "*pure hearts:*" Under divine inspection, their motives are seen to be pure. Their whole purpose and endeavor is to glorify God and to bless their fellow-men, especially the household of faith. They "*have not lifted up their soul unto vanity:*" They have no vain worldly ambitions, either secretly or openly cherished and ministered to behind the outward profession of entire consecration to God – no ambition to be great, or good, or wise in the eyes of men, nor to grasp the fleeting earthly treasures once consecrated to God. Nor have they "*sworn deceitfully:*" They have not made a covenant with God of entire consecration to his service, with a secret determination to keep back part of the price; nor have they since making the covenant repudiated its obligations.

The whole course of this class is one of sincerity and truth. Their character is that of meekness and faith; they love righteousness and desire to be molded and fashioned after the principles of righteousness; and they correspondingly hate wickedness and every evil way. With a realization of their own short-comings from the standard of perfection, they put no confidence in the flesh, but humbly and implicitly [R1297 : page 55] submit their will and judgment to the will and plan of God. So they have no schemes or plans of their own, but are fully devoted to the accomplishment of God's plan, in God's own way and time, having full faith in his sure word of prophecy and promise.

Those who have such a spirit come reverently to the Word of God to learn God's will and way, and with a desire to walk accordingly; and here they receive the divinely-provided armor of God, which will protect all who carefully put it on from all the fiery darts of the enemy. Without this complete armor, no child of God is safe in this evil day. "Wherefore," says the Apostle, "take unto

you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." – Eph. 6:13.

The evil day here referred to is this Day of the Lord, in which we are now living, wherein every man's work shall be tried, so as by fire. These are the "perilous times" of which the Apostle forewarned the church – times peculiarly perilous to Christian faith, because of the many subtle and delusive forms of error now springing up to intercept the progress of the truth. But God's provision for his saints is equal to the emergency of the perilous hour. Never before this "evil day" was it possible for the saints to put on the whole armor of God; and never before was it needed. For some years past the Lord has been handing us this armor, piece by piece, and has been telling us to put it on and wear it that we might become accustomed to it and feel at ease and at home in it, because the time was shortly coming when it would be impossible to stand without it.

Some – a few – have been heeding the counsel. Carefully they have buckled on every part of the armor as fast as they received it, and in consequence, to-day they stand completely clothed with the truth. Their loins are girt about with it; their feet are shod with it; and it covers their head [their intellectual faculties] as a helmet of salvation [salvation from the snares and delusions of error]. Then they have on the breastplate of righteousness – a righteous character, which the truth has developed in them; and in their hands they bear the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, which they are now able to handle with ease and vigor in defense of the doctrines of Christ; while their ample shield of faith is an able defense against all the fiery darts of the enemy, so that the flying arrows do not even jar the armor or for a moment stun the inner man.

Praise God for such an armor! Brother, have you put it on? Do not rest satisfied with the idea that you can get along as well as

your fathers did with only a part of it. The time is coming, yea, and now is, when you must have it complete, or you will surely fall. The portions of the armor presented to the saints of the past were sufficient for their day and trial; but a greater trial of faith in this "evil day" necessitates a more complete defense.

Do not say to the Lord, "Well, I have the breastplate and the shield; no, thank you, I think I shall not need the helmet;" or, "I think I can get along without the sword." I tell you, you will need them all; make haste and put them on without delay. Some of you should have had them on long ago, and should be able to help others don them now. Many are already falling, and sadly many are feeling their lack of the helmet. Some with mere curiosity-interest have spent much valuable time in looking at the various parts of the armor as presented to them for the past few years, instead of earnestly buckling them on and proving them: and they have become so used to merely looking at the beautiful pieces of the armor that they expect the process of bringing forward new pieces to continue forever. Let such wake up to the fact that the armor is already complete and that no more can be added to it. That is to say, the plan of God is now rounded out to completeness and no more can be added to it, because anything more would be a superfluity. The Lord has graciously shown us its entire outline, as well as the manner in which the various parts of it work together. Look at your hand: it has four fingers and a thumb. You do not say, Well, perhaps another thumb or finger will appear by and by. You know there will be no such thing. That hand is complete and another member added to it would be superfluous.

Just so those who have come to view the full **[R1297 : page 56]** completeness of God's plan, as now unfolded to us, know that nothing more could be added to it. It is gloriously complete and worthy indeed of its great Author. But, while the outlining, the general harmony and the working together of the various parts are all clear to us now, we yet have room for profound thought and

study of it, and probably will still have even after we are glorified. Some make a great mistake in continually putting on and taking off various proffered armors. There is but one armor that will be of any use or protection to us, and that is that which is stamped with the scarlet stamp of the precious blood of Christ. Every piece of this divine armor is so stamped, and it all fits together. If you think to change your helmet of salvation for some other helmet, you will very soon want another breastplate to match it. And you will want another sword; for this sword will not match with any other helmet. And this shield of faith will not match with any other armor. Do not allow your head to grow too big for the helmet which the Lord has provided, and then go around hunting a new helmet to fit your swelled and wrong ideas. If the helmet supplied in God's Word will not fit you, do not fancy that the increase is real wisdom, and try to stretch the old one or to get a new helmet; but freely apply the liniment of humility and reduce it till the helmet does fit.

Put on the whole armor of God. And make sure that you accept no spurious brand. Every piece of the genuine is stamped with a cross and the words – To be worn only by the redeemed. Put on piece by piece, quickly; buckle it on securely; and having done all, **STAND**. The position thus suggested implies an attack: the attack will surely come, and indeed has already come to many. Are you ready now to do good service as a valiant soldier of the cross of Christ? Stand! do not run away; stand your ground and battle for the truth.

As we have already observed, it is as truly a part of God's purpose to let some fall in this evil day, as it is to enable others to stand. He therefore permits the strong delusion to take possession of all who have pleasure in unrighteousness, and who therefore do not believe the truth. Such are unworthy of the truth, and sooner or later every such an one must fall. All such are condemned as unworthy of membership in Christ, the vine; and as the time for the exaltation of the Church draws nearer and nearer, the testing

may be expected to increase until all the unworthy ones are weeded out. He will gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend [those who put off the wedding garment of Christ's imputed righteousness, etc.], and all that do iniquity [those who practice sin]. And then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

If, then, we would escape the delusions of this evil day, let us see to it that we are in deed and in truth lovers of righteousness; let us receive the truth in meekness, hold it with humility and thankfulness, and serve it with energy and zeal.
